

Commanding Officer – 4th MEB(AT)
Leadership Philosophy
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In my 30 plus year career as a Marine I have had the pleasure of serving for some truly great leaders as well as some of the worst. While serving the latter group may not fit the normal definition of a pleasurable experience, I consider both types of experience to be important and critical to the development of my own leadership style. I have learned much from each assignment but probably the most lasting lessons have been taken from the worst leaders. I discovered early on that trying to be someone else simply does not work, and trying to emulate great leaders outside of your own capabilities often leads to becoming one of the worst leaders. Thus, the first pillar of my leadership philosophy is to “be yourself”.

Regardless of rank or billet, in order to be successful in leading Marines and Sailors, you must act within your own personality and capabilities. You can certainly ascribe for greatness and strive for continued self-improvement, but the moment you lose track of who you are and what drives you each day, will be the same moment you forget that leading Marines and Sailors requires you to first understand what you are capable of accomplishing. A leader who is fully aware of his or her own strengths and weaknesses will intuitively understand when it is time to lead from the front and when it is time to let others rise to the occasion and contribute their strengths to the fight. I am not suggesting you back away from challenges but rather that you give others in the team the chance to complement your own leadership efforts. In the end, you get a team effort based upon harnessing all the team strengths into one strong pull. Marines and Sailors want to be led, not told how to achieve the mission. That leads me the second pillar of my leadership philosophy, which is to avoid micromanagement through the leadership trait of trust.

Whether you are leading Marines or Sailors in harm’s way or back at mainside, great leaders are those who have mastered the art of trusting their subordinates to do the right thing. When you understand what your own strengths are and where you need the efforts of others to make up for your own deficiencies, trust will be established. If you spend most of every waking minute telling others how to accomplish the task and then hover over them as you micromanage each step of the task, trust will be destroyed. You earn the trust of your Marines and Sailors by letting them contribute to mission accomplishment after you have given sufficient initial guidance. A great leader understands when it’s time to then stand back and guide efforts rather than manage them. The final way you **EARN** trust of Marines is by caring about them and for them. The third pillar of my leadership philosophy is centered firmly on caring for your Marines, Sailors and their families.

Over the last three decades I have seen a lot of lip service being given to the concept of caring for those you lead and for their families. Many well-meaning leaders have set lofty goals and established numerous programs designed to “show how much we care”. However, if all you do as a leader is produce a mountain of documents loaded with buzz words about caring and family values, but never follow your own words, the message falls on deaf and now disillusioned ears. The notion of caring about your fellow Marines, Sailors and their families requires no special skills or deep budgets. Anyone

who has been raised in a family led by parents who truly care about their well-being knows that sincere efforts result in a strong family regardless of wealth or status. That same sincere approach needs to be followed by leaders who want to earn respect and expect self-sacrifice when it's called for. I cannot teach you sincerity as a leader, but I can and will demonstrate that I care about you as a Marine or Sailor and that your family has an extremely important role in all of us being successful in mission accomplishment. As all good parents or leaders of families should do, boundaries must be set so that all know what will destroy the fabric of the family. So, the last pillar of my leadership philosophy is to take the time to clearly define what will not be tolerated.

I will not tolerate hazing in any form. Completion of enlisted or officer recruit training is the one and only time you need to prove your worth and mettle. Hazing is often the end result of a leader practicing or condoning what they believe to be a required need to screen out the weak. Whether it's physical, mental or emotional, hazing in any form will be dealt with in a swift and strong manner. Discrimination through race, gender, religious belief, rank or any other means of purposely favoring one group over another will not be tolerated. History has proven that the battlefield recognizes no difference between the suffering or death of Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, male, female or any particular race. We all bleed, suffer and die with the same cruel indignity of warfare. We will not then practice separatism off the battlefield. Instead, encourage understanding of physical differences or beliefs and demand that all respect each other regardless of those differences. Finally, I will not tolerate leaders who abuse their authority. The unique gift of leadership over Marines and Sailors comes with the price tag of moral and ethical responsibility to never cause those being led to sacrifice for the only benefit of furthering a leader's career or reputation. If you cannot exercise personal and professional humility as a leader, you will soon join the ranks of worst leaders ever. Those being led must know that no one will ever take advantage of them or their trust, so don't let them down in that fundamental belief.

That's it. My leadership philosophy says know yourself and act within known strengths and weaknesses, establish trust by avoiding the over-management of everyone's efforts, demonstrate sincere care for those you lead and for their families and finally ensure all know what will not be tolerated so that the focus remains on accomplishing the mission. Above all, have fun at what you do and ensure those that you lead enjoy the unique experience of serving our Corps and country. Our MEB will certainly change over the next few months, but what should always remain constant is the desire to earn the trust, confidence and respect of those Marines and Sailors who make up this magnificent organization.

Semper fi,

G. R. Sachtleben
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